

Study on Manpower

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): There are 14 Créditistes and nearly 160 Liberals. I am the only one representing my party. Of course, the ratio happens to be quite good.

An hon. Member: Quality matters more than quantity.

Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse): You are right. That is why there are only 14 of us.

[English]

Mr. Howard (Skeena): Mr. Speaker, I wonder whether I should add to the consideration of this point of order a comment about the conduct of the Chair—the occupant was not yourself—during the time the original question relating to the quorum was raised and a count was taken. The submission has been made that it is the counting by the Clerk at that time which should apply. In substantiation of the conclusion to which the Clerk came at that time, we have the statement of the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield) who is highly regarded and highly respected as a man of great integrity. He was sitting in the house. He rose in his place a moment ago and said that by his count there were fewer than 20 members present. The hon. member for Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert) who was also in his place at the time the Clerk took the count, also said there were fewer than 20 members in the house. My hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) who was behind the curtain as it was his right to be, also counted, and I too counted. We both counted 14.

Hon. members can cast reflections on my count if they like, but certainly not on that of my hon. friend from Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles). The other party in the house was the Liberal party. Not one of them has said, nor can he say because it would not be true, that there were more than 20 members in the house at the time the Clerk made the count after the point of order had been raised in the first instance. It was only subsequent to that time that hon. gentlemen opposite were able to find enough of their members skulking around in the corridors to make up the 20 or so members whose names were taken down officially.

I submit that the only thing to which Your Honour can pay regard is the original count by the Clerk and the declarations by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and the hon. member for

[Mr. Lambert (Bellechasse).]

Bellechasse (Mr. Lambert), who have indicated what conclusion they reached, in the absence of any declarations to the contrary on behalf of the government.

Mr. Honey: On the point of order raised by the hon. member for Skeena (Mr. Howard) it might be of some assistance to Your Honour if I could ask him a question in line with his argument as to the point at which the count should have been taken. When he says "immediately", does he mean immediately before the N.D.P. members left or immediately after they left?

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh.

Mr. Howard (Skeena): The hon. member knows the rule as well as I do. If he does not, he should have paid attention when it was read. No matter how you try to distort it you cannot distort the fact that the Clerk made a count of members, and this is the count which the Chair should take into consideration. He reported the result of that count to The Acting Speaker (Mr. Béchard) when he was in the chair, and this is the count which should apply. I submit there is no alternative but to rely on the situation which existed immediately prior to Your Honour taking the chair. There can only be one Speaker in the chair at a time, of course, even though the situation may change. It is the situation which confronted the Acting Speaker when he occupied the chair and when the report was made to him which should count.

Mr. Speaker: We have a very difficult situation here. Whether there were 14, 16, 18 or 20 members present when the count was made is not easy to say. I have taken into consideration what has been said by the Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Stanfield), the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) and others to the effect that when the count was made originally there were only 14 members present in the house. The fact that some members left the house caused some difficulty for the Acting Speaker and for the Clerk Assistant; they were counting people who were coming in and people who were going out.

At the same time I feel I have to consider that there were probably not 20 members in the house when the first count was made. When the Clerk Assistant on instructions from the Acting Speaker took the names down—he has a list which is now inscribed in the records of the house—there were more than 20, but I think that for the purposes of citation 60 it cannot be the number of names